

NJMC NEWS RELEASE

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**New Jersey
Meadowlands
Commission**

NJMC Announces Fall Public Programming

Workshops, Discussions, Performances Focus on “Astronomy and the Universe”

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The wide-ranging influence of outer space on music, art, science and more is the focus of the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission’s (NJMC) Fall 2011 Public Programs. The “Astronomy and the Universe” series includes discussions on the history of astronomy, musical performances inspired by the stars and a moon-madness themed Halloween program for children.

“The Meadowlands Commission has scheduled an exciting, educational and first-rate fall schedule for space enthusiasts of all ages,” said Marcia Karrow, Executive Director of the NJMC. “The stars and planets are a fascinating topic that has influenced the arts and sciences from ancient times to today, and the Commission is pleased to offer residents a chance to explore the world of astronomy and the universe through a variety of programs.”

The first major event arrives on Sept. 21, when residents are invited to celebrate the autumnal equinox with a screening of the documentary, “A Sidewalk Astronomer: John Dobson.” A former Vedanta monk and amateur astronomer, Dobson founded the Sidewalk Astronomers, an organization that encourages amateur stargazers to share their telescopes and knowledge with others on busy city streets and in national parks. The viewing will be followed by a talk with filmmaker Jeffrey Fox Jacobs and a chance to view the stars at the NJMC’s William D. McDowell Observatory.

Space-themed symphonies take center stage on Sept. 24 when the North Jersey Concert Band performs “The Music of Star Wars, The Planets and the Rest of the Universe.” The concert includes selections from John Williams (“Star Wars,” “E.T.”) and the most famous of all galaxy-themed suites, Gustav Holst’s “The Planets.” The interstellar performances continue as Musicora performs “Music of the Universe” on Oct. 23 and jazz pianist Rossano Sportiello and vocalist/bassist Nikki Parrot explore the Great American Songbook with a view toward tunes written about the sun, moon and stars on Nov. 20

“Marsh Moon Madness” is the theme of this year’s “Halloween in the Meadowlands” event on Oct. 27. The highly popular children’s program features games, crafts, hayrides and spooky walks that will take kids on a journey through DeKorte Park to expose the myths and truths about the moon. Children are also invited to view the night sky at the McDowell Observatory on Dec. 9 as part of the “Child’s Guide to the Universe” program.

Even aspects of gardening are influenced by the universe. Food historian Judith Krall Russo sheds light on the practice of seeding according to the movements of the moon, planets and stars in her “Planting by the Stars: Bio-dynamic Gardening” workshop on Nov. 13.

Other season highlights include discussions of the early history of astronomy on Oct. 4 and the search for life in the universe on Nov. 9. A program on art and the cosmos is scheduled for Nov. 15, and a workshop on Dec. 3 focuses on how adults can dispel fears their children may have about predictions that the world will end in 2012.

The season wraps up with a winter solstice family celebration on Dec. 21. Families are invited to build their own constellation models and comets, check out a collection of meteorites, and visit the Star Lab, a portable planetarium.

All events take place at the Meadowlands Environment Center in DeKorte Park, home of the NJMC. Cost is \$5, MEC members \$4, except for “Marsh Moon Madness,” which is \$8, MEC members \$6; and “Watercolor 102,” which is \$30 including supplies, or \$20 if you bring your own painting supplies and watercolor paper.

Registration is required for all events. To register online, and for more information about the programs, visit www.njmeadowlands.gov/ec. To request a schedule of events and to register by mail or in person, call 201-460-8300.

The William D. McDowell Observatory is open to the public for free stargazing through its research-grade telescope on Monday and Wednesday evenings, weather permitting. Hours are 8:30 to 10:30 p.m. in August, 8 to 10 p.m. during September and October, and 7 to 10 p.m. in November and December. Visitors must be able to climb 25 steps. For more information, and to arrange group tours, call 201-777-2416.

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